MISC.

# When the Deacon Talked in Church

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We were not expecting anything unusual that day, but we got it just the same. It was a warm Sunday in June, and the annual foreign missionary sermon was to be preached and the collection taken. That didn't excite us any, for we had slept, I may say through both sermon and collection many a time before. It wasn't the sermon either, for that didn't seem so different from usual, but that somehow it just happened to come home to the deacon. So far as I remember, the preacher took for his text that verse about "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," only he dwelt considerably upon the "Go YE." He said it didn't say anything about taking up a collection, but it did say to go, and the Lord would never be satisfied until we went.

Our collections, anyway, he told us, didn't amount to much and always reminded him of the story he had heard of a little boy. It seems the little fellow was saving some of the best meat on his plate for his dog. The mother noticed that and told him to eat that himself, and after dinner he could take what was left on his plate and give to the dog. So after dinner he picked up the bits of fat, bone, and gristle that were left and took them out to the dog, and some one heard him say sadly: "I meant to bring you an offering, Fido, but I've only got a collection."

Well, it did kind of hit home, for most of us hadn't been giving much of a collection, only

just enough to look respectable when the plate passes.

But the preacher went on until he showed us that the command, "Go ye," meant just what it said, that we had to go. He told us that everybody had to go. Now, I had always thought that there was some special kind of call that comes to one here and another there; and when they felt that they had to be a missionary. But he said that was not in the Bible, that *everybody* was commanded to *go* unless they had a call to stay at home. And even if they had a call to stay at home, they were bound to do their best to find a substitute to go for them, and to help everybody to go that could.

Then he just asked us how we would feel if we had no Jesus to go to for forgiveness of our sins, for help in our trials, for strength against temptation, comfort in sorrow, for guidance in perplexity; no Jesus to tell us how to live here, and especially no Jesus to tell us about the love of God and where our loved ones are when the darkness of death shuts down upon them. This was what made life so dark for the heathen, and in our gifts we were to remember the Lord's command to us and the heathen's need for us to go.

Then he prayed a bit, and the choir didn't sing any that day, but the organ played a soft voluntary while the collection was being taken. Old Deacon Bright got up to pass the plate on his side. The old deacon was as fine a man as you could meet in a day's journey, as good a neighbor and as honest a man as ever lived—nice two-hundred-acre farm and a fine family, all mem-

bers of the Church. Jim, the oldest, ran the farm, Jack, the second boy, was just ready to go to college, and Mary had her diploma as a teacher and was studying to be a nurse in the Toronto Hospital. The mother too was just as nice a woman as you could find anywhere. The old deacon had been getting considerably deaf of late years, and he sat alone in the front pew. I guess he got to kind of dreaming over the sermon, for as he rose to get the collection plate he began to talk to himself, and to do it out loud. But, bless you, he couldn't hear himself, for you have to shout to make him understand anything.

So, as I said, he took the plate and began to talk. As near as I remember, this is what he said: "So that 'Go ye' means *me* and every one of us, and this is the Lord's plate, and what we put in is our substitute and shows how much we love him and how much we'd have been worth to him, seeing we don't go ourselves." Then he got to the back seat and passed the plate. Now, our back seats are always full of young men; and as they put their money on the plate, the old man went on: "Twenty-five cents from Sam Jones. My boy, you'd have been worth more than that to the Lord. Ten cents from David Brown, five cents from Tom Stone, and nothing from Steve Jackson. Forty cents for four boys, and every one of them could go too. They're worth six hundred dollars a year to their fathers and only forty cents to the Lord."

In the next pew Mr. Allen and his family sat. Mr. Allen put on a dollar for the family, and the old deacon moved away, saying, "The price of one of your dinners down town, half of that pair

of gloves you wear, almost as much as you spent for ice cream last week, a box of candy," were the deacon's comments as the coins fell from the hands of the Judge and family.

Then Father John Robb put in a bill rolled up, Mrs. Robb put in another, Johnny Robb a little envelope bulging with pennies, and Maggie helped the baby to put in another little bag; and the old deacon said: "God bless them!"

You may be sure we were all listening by this time, though we didn't dare turn around; and there were lots of us mighty glad the deacon wasn't taking up the collection in our aisle.

John McClay's pew came. "Worth a dollar a year to the Lord and two thousand a year to himself," said the deacon. "Seventy-five dollars for a bicycle and twenty-five cents for the Lord don't match, Tommy McClay."

"Ah, Miss Eden, it looks queer for a hand with a fifty-dollar ring to drop five cents in the plate."

"A new house for yourself and an old quarter for your Lord, Alex. Bovey?"

"You take in washing and can give five dollars to the Lord! God bless you, Mrs. Dean. What? Minnie has some, too, and wee Robbie?"

"Fifty, seventy-five, eighty-five, ninety. Ah, your dinner will cost more than you have given, Mr. Steele."

"A bright, new dollar bill, and spread out too. Mr. Perkins, I am afraid ninety-five cents was for show."

"A check from Mr. Hay. It will be a good one too, for he gives a tenth to the Lord."

"Two dollars from you, Harry Atkins, is a

small gift to the Lord that healed your dear wife."

"Ah, Miss Kitty Hughes, that fifty cents never cost you a thought; and you, Miss Marion, only a quarter, when both of you could go and support yourselves."

"Five cents from the father and a cent from each of the family. I guess John Hull and family don't love the heathen brothers very hard."

"Ah, Mrs. McRunion, that means a good deal to you. The Lord keep you until you join the good man that's gone."

"Charlie Baker, and you too, Effie—I doubt if the Lord will take any substitute for you."

"Nothing from Mr. Cantile? Heathens at home? Perhaps you are one of them."

"Five cents, Mr. Donald. I doubt if you'd want to put that in the Lord's hand."

Then the old man came to his own pew, and his wife put in an envelope. "Ah, Mary, my dear, I am afraid that we have been robbing the Lord all these years. I doubt we'd have put Jack on the plate, wife. Jim, my boy, you'd be worth far more than that to the Lord." Jack and Mary sat in the choir.

So it went from pew to pew till the old man came to the front again, and there he stood a moment, the plate in his left hand, and after fumbling in his vest pocket awhile he said: "No, that isn't enough, Lord; you ought to get more than that; you've been very good to me." So he put the plate down, and, taking out an old leathern wallet, counted out some bills on the plate, and said: "I'm sorry, Lord, I didn't know you wanted me to go, and Jim will keep mother and

me on the farm, now we're getting old; but I won't keep back Jack any longer; and Mary's been wanting to go too, only I wouldn't let her. Take them both, Lord."

Then while the old man sat down and buried his face in his hands Deacon Wise jumped up and said: "Dear pastor, we haven't done our duty. Let's take up the collection again next Sunday." And a chorus of "Amens" came from all over the church.

But the pastor got up, with tears in his eyes, and said: "My friends, I haven't done all I could, either. I want to give more next Sunday, and I'll give my boy too."

Then we sang a hymn as we closed, but it sounded different than it ever had before:

"Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

The organist said she believed it went through the roof, and I guess the Lord thought so too.

I think that old deacon felt pretty bad when he found that his day-dreaming had been done aloud. And one or two felt pretty hard at first, but they knew it was true. So that was what started our missionary Church, and we've kept on ever since. There have been fourteen members of our young people's society to go as missionaries in the last five years—six of our best young men and eight of our brightest girls.

Jack Bright? He married the organist, and they are on the border of Tibet, where his medical skill is winning a way for Christ. Mary Bright married the minister's son, and they went to Africa.

The old deacon has gone to his rest now. I wish we had more like him. Jim keeps his mother on the farm yet, but she's getting pretty feeble. You're much obliged? O, that's nothing. I'm glad to tell you. You see I have two of my own boys that are in the work, one in India and the other in China, and another getting ready to go. My name? John Donald. You're laughing? Yes, I was the one who gave only five cents that day. What the old man said about putting it in the Lord's hand struck me. But I hope to give the Lord a boy or a girl for every one of those five cents. Even my two youngest are talking about going already. You see the Lord said, "Go ye," so we're going. Good-by.—*Selected.*

R. & R. P. O. BOX 216, HARRISBURG, PA.